



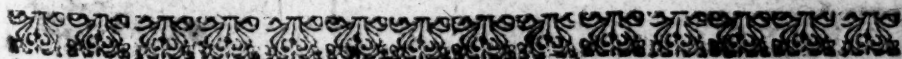
THE
Lord BISHOP of
L O N D O N's
S E R M O N

Preached to the

S O C I E T I E S

F O R

Reformation of Manners.



THE
LORD BISHOP OF
LONDON'S
SERMON
Preached to the
SOCIETY
FOR
Reformation of Manners.

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S E R M O N

Preached to the

S O C I E T I E S
F O R
R E F O R M A T I O N
O F
M A N N E R S,

A T

St. Mary-le-Bow,

O N

Monday January the 6th. 1723.

R. Gibson
By the Right Reverend Father in God,
EDMUND Lord Bishop of LONDON.

The Fourth Edition.

Printed for JOHN WYAT at the *Rose*
in *St. Paul's-Church-Yard.* 1725.

SEYMOUR
SOCIETY
FOR
REFORMATION
OF
MANNERS

AT
SEYMOUR
ON
the following Sunday the 1st of July

By the Right Reverend Father in God
EDMUND LEE Bishop of London

OF THE
Printed by W. & A. G. Smith
in the Strand

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S E R M O N

Preached to the

S O C I E T I E S

F O R

Reformation of Manners, &c.

P S A L. cxix. 136.

*Rivers of waters run down mine eyes,
because they keep not thy Law.*

Or, as it is in the other Translation,

*Mine eyes gush out with water, because
men keep not thy Law.*



THE design of our assembling at this time, is to excite and encourage one another in making head against Vice and Profaneness, and maintaining the Honour of God and Religion in the World. And because a zealous and steady prosecution of this work is not to be expected, but where there is first an inward concern and grief at the wickedness that we see in the

the world ; nor is that concern and grief to be raised and kept up in the mind, but by first considering the Work as the Cause of God, and then making it our *own* Cause upon a fix'd Principle of Duty and Conscience ; therefore, I shall take occasion from the words of the *Psalmist*, to enquire into these two heads :

I. *First*, How does it become a good Man to be affected, when he sees and observes the Wickedness of the world ? He ought to lay it to heart, and to be *grieved and concerned* at it.

II. *Secondly*, What is to be done on the part of a good man, to shew that his grief and concern are hearty and sincere.

It. then, How does it become a good man to be affected, when he sees and observes the wickedness of the world ? He ought to lay it to heart, and to be *grieved and concerned* at it. For, as Religion is properly the Cause of God ; so every good man has in effect enter'd and lifted himself in the *service* of that Cause ; to support and maintain it in the world, against the force and opposition of its Enemies. These Enemies are *Sin* and *Satan* ; which are perpetually labouring against Religion and Goodness, and trying all ways possible to make head against them ; to banish them out of the world, and to cover the face of the earth with Wickedness and Profaneness.

When Religion thrives and encreases, and it appears that mankind in general grow more sober and virtuous, or less dissolute and profane ; that the House of God is more frequented, and Swearing and Blasphemy less heard in our streets ; that particular persons within our own knowledge are reformed and be-

come new men, or (in other words) have quitted the service of the Enemy, and are come over to the side of Religion; in this case, the Cause of God visibly prospers and gains ground; and the consideration hereof is just matter of *Triumph* and *Rejoycing* to every good man; being, in effect, the success and prosperity of his own Cause.

On the contrary, when the wickedness of mankind encreases, and we see Vice grow more fashionable, and less shameful in the eyes of the world; when men go on to sin with greater degrees of *boldness* and *openness*; when new kinds of Vice spring up, and old ones take deeper root; and when our own eyes are witnesses, how some who seem'd to be hearty in Religion, are fall'n away; and others, who are and have been wicked, remain obstinate and incorrigible after all Endeavours to reclaim them; in this case, the Empire of Sin and Satan upon earth is enlarged, and the Cause of God and Religion loses ground; and by consequence as many as are engaged in the *service* and concerned for the *honour* of that Cause, must be grieved and afflicted, to see that wickedness prevails and gains strength upon the earth.

And to be inwardly *grieved* at the encrease of wickedness, is such a necessary effect of a real concern for Religion, that whoever sees it (as, God knows, it is too visible) and yet does not find himself sensibly *grieved* and *affected* with the sight, may rest assured that the Cause of God and Religion is not at his heart. For whoever has that Cause at his heart, will not only grieve to see a *general* corruption of principles and manners in a Nation; but the wickedness, of every *particular notorious* Sinner will raise in his heart a *proportionable* measure of grief and concern. The heart that honours and loves God, cannot but be grieved to see Sinners despise and affront

front him; the heart that loves man, as the image of God, cannot but grieve to see him run on obstinately in the way that leads to eternal destruction. In like manner, a due reverence to the Name of God, must of course raise a sensible uneasiness in every good man, when he hears that holy Name profaned and blasphemed by oaths and curses; as a conscientious regard to the Laws of God, grounded upon a sense of the *Purity* and *Holiness* of them, cannot fail to raise a concern in Righteous and Religious men, when they see those Laws openly despised and trampled on by bold and profligate Sinners.

This then is a necessary testimony of a good man, one who has the Cause of God and Religion at his heart, to be grieved and concerned at the growth of sin, and the wickedness of mankind. And accordingly, this zeal for the honour of God and his Laws, and this concern at the open violation of them, appears eminently in the practice of some of the best men that we read of in Scripture. When *Israel* had corrupted themselves with Idolatry, and thrown down the Altars of the true God, *Elijah* (as we read, *1 Kings* xix. 14.) was very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts. *David*, when he saw the profaneness of mankind, tells us (*Psal.* 69. 9.) that the zeal of God's house had ev'n eaten him up; and he makes all wicked men, i. e. all the Enemies of God, to be his own Enemies (*Psal.* 139. 21.) Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? Yea, I hate them right sore, ev'n as tho' they were mine Enemies: and we are told in the Text, that when the Psalmist observed among the People, only a Neglect of the Laws of God, his eyes gush'd out with water, and he was overwhelm'd with grief. And a more early testimony than all these, of the concern of a good man at the wickedness of the world, is that of righteous Lot;

of

of whom St. Peter says (2 Pet. ii. 8.) that *that righteous man, dwelling among a People abominably wicked, in seeing and bearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds.*

For as this grief and trouble at the wickedness of mankind, is the necessary and immediate effect of a concern for the Honour of Almighty God and his Religion upon earth ; so it is what every righteous and good man *will* feel, more or less, in his own breast ; and whoever feels it not, may rest assured, that he has not Religion and the glory of God at his heart.

I pass on to the Second Enquiry ;

II. What is to be done on the part of a good man, to shew that his grief and concern at the wickedness that is in the world, are hearty and sincere. And,

1st. The immediate effect of a real grief and concern at the wickedness of mankind, is a firm resolution, that we will use our utmost diligence to oppose and make head against it. In many cases we are grieved at things we cannot help, and concerned at Evils that it is wholly out of our power to prevent or amend ; and in such cases, Grieving is the only testimony we can give of our dislike and abhorrence. But when the Evil we pretend to lament, is such as may in some measure be help'd and remedied by our own Endeavours ; there, to grieve and sit still, is by no means a testimony of a sincere and hearty concern. It is rather, a testimony of the contrary, that the grief and concern we wou'd be thought to have, is only *pretended* and *hypocritical*. Now, as it is in the power of every man, be his condition what it will, to oppose and discountenance

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Vice, in one degree or another; so no man must reckon that he is truly *grieved* at the wickedness of the world, unless his grief be accompany'd with a resolution to exert himself in opposing and discountenancing it, as far as his Station and Abilities enable him. Nothing more common in the world, than to hear men inveighing against the wickedness of mankind, and lamenting the great growth of it, in expressions full of zeal and concern for Religion; and for doing this, they expect to be reckon'd the Patrons of Virtue and Goodness in the world. Whereas, in truth, good words make these just such supports to Religion, as they made a certain sort of Persons that St. James speaks of (*chap. ii. 15.*) supports to the Poor; who, when they saw a *brother or sister naked and destitute of daily food*, would pretend a great compassion for them, and say, *Depart in peace, be you warmed and filled; but they gave them not those things that were needful to the body.* This, I say, is just such Charity to the Poor, as general Invectives against Vice, without endeavours to reform it, are a zeal for God and Religion. To come up to this character, we must not only consider Vice in general, and express our abhorrence of it at large; but we must set ourselves against particular Vices, and those too as reigning in the hearts, and appearing in the lives, of particular persons; and we must resolve, that we will leave no way unattempted, no means untry'd, that may probably help to reclaim and reform them. We must first consider of the most proper Remedies, and then how to administer those Remedies in the most proper methods; what are the Arguments that are most likely to be effectual, and what the Times most seasonable to offer and enforce them; how we may manage and carry on the work with the best advantage; by our selves, or by others;
by

by Reasonings, or by Admonitions; in the way of Gentleness, or in the way of Severity. And while we are *Deliberating* about these things, we must not be faint or discouraged, if we foresee Difficulties in the way; but it must be our fix'd and settled Resolution, that whatever appears to be fairly practicable, shall certainly be done.

For it is a work that in many respects requires great degrees of Patience and Resolution. The very attempt to reform others, supposes they have Vices that want to be reformed; and that supposition carries in it something that is harsh and ungrateful, and, however sincerely intended for their good, does sometimes provoke sinners to be our Enemies, or at least to cease to be our Friends; to charge us with rudeness and ill-nature, in return for the greatest instance of *kindness* and *charity* on our part. Sin also, when it is grown into a habit, is apt to make men very froward and uneasy under any admonitions and persuasions to leave it; and after great pains has been taken with a sinner in order to reclaim him, we shall oft-times find that it has been labour in vain, and see little or no hope of his reformation in the end. So that upon both these accounts, it is necessary that whoever sets himself to suppress and discourage Vice, should be armed before-hand with great degrees of Patience and Resolution. And these he is to arm himself with, by considering that the Cause he is engaged in, is the Cause of God and his Religion, against Sin and Satan; that no labour can be too great for the saving of a Soul; that tho' he cannot perhaps make his neighbour better, it is a great work if he can keep him from being worse; that altho' he do fail in the whole, and can neither work him into goodness, nor restrain him from wickedness, yet his

honest *Endeavours* to do it are accepted of God, and will meet with a distinguishing reward from his hand. To this purpose, *St James* (v. 19, 20.) concludes his Epistle with a remarkable Encouragement to every Christian to labour in this blessed Work: *Brethren*, says he, *if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.*

These then are the Resolutions, and these the Endeavours that will appear in every Christian, who is sincerely grieved and concerned at the wickedness of mankind. For since every Christian is by his Profession a declared Enemy to sin; the opposing and discouraging of sin, where-ever it is found, is by consequence the proper work of every Christian in general. But,

2dly, This concern and resolution to discourage and suppress Vice, ought to appear more *eminently* and more *peculiarly* in those who have received a special Authority from God to do it, and have there-upon a special obligation to exert their Authority for this good end, within the bounds and limits of their respective Powers: As, Parents over their Children, Masters over their Servants, Ministers over the Flocks which are committed to their Care, and Magistrates over all Persons whatsoever within the compass of their Power and Authority. To each of these God has given a *Commission* to oppose and discountenance Wickedness: to Parents, and Masters, by corporal punishments and other restraints and discouragements, as occasion requires; to the Ministers of the Gospel, by earnest and repeated Admonitions and Reproofs; and to the Magistrates, by a vigorous execution of the Laws against Vice and Profane-

faneness. It is, as I have already observed, the duty of Christians in general, to shew their abhorrence of Vice, and their concern at the wickedness of mankind, in an honest endeavour to convince and reclaim Sinners, in all places and at all times, as they see occasion, and opportunities come in their way; and this, Parents and Masters, Ministers and Magistrates are obliged to, in common with all other Christians. But besides this *general* Obligation, they have also, each of them, a *particular Charge* of their own to take care of; as being specially appointed thereunto by the Providence of God, and having received from him, in their several stations, full and sufficient Authority to restrain and discourage wickedness in all those whom he hath committed to their Care and Government.

There is a pretence, by which Christians at large excuse themselves from attempting the reformation of particular Sinners; that tho' it is true, they have known them long, and to their great grief, have beheld the wickedness of their ways, yet they bear no relation to them, nor have any Authority over them, and therefore are not obliged, more than the rest of their neighbours, to be at the pains of exhorting and admonishing. Now, this is a strange way of reasoning, that because every one is obliged to put to a helping hand, and the rest neglect their Duty, I am therefore discharged from mine. If any argument is to be drawn from that avoiding and neglecting of the work by *others*, it is this; that therefore there is the greater need, and by consequence the greater obligation upon me to attend it.

But suppose this were a good Excuse to Christians at large, as it certainly is not; yet Parents and Masters, Ministers and Magistrates, could have no right to plead it, because to *them* God has point-

pointed out the particular *persons* whose manners and behaviour are to be their particular Care, and has given them special power and authority over those very persons for that very end: It is a Charge that he hath committed to *them* in particular; and from *them* he will require a particular account, how well they have executed it. And since the obligation is thus strict; how far are they from being duly concerned for the honour of God, or grieved or concerned at the wickedness of mankind, and how much further from studying to reform it, who can suffer the very persons that God hath committed to their own immediate government, to go on quietly and securely in a wicked or dissolute course! How can Parents and Masters, in particular, who must be eye-witnesses of the greatest part of the behaviour of their Children and Servants, answer it to their own consciences, to see *them* wicked, and yet stand by unconcerned; and how will they answer it to God at the Last Day, when the wickedness they have tolerated in those their Inferiors, shall rise up in judgment against themselves? This is so far from laying the wickedness of mankind to heart, or being *grieved* to see it (as the *Psalmist* was in the Text, and as every good man ought to be,) that it makes them the *chief Patrons* and *Encouragers* of it; so far from a *zeal* and *forwardness* to suppress Vice, that the strictest Command from God cannot force them to lift up a hand against it; and, finally, so far is it from the looking abroad for *Opportunities* to oppose and discountenance Sin, that it is the nourishing and cherishing of it within their own Walls.

But tho' the Vices of *Children* and *Servants* cannot well escape the knowledge of their Parents and Masters;

sters; yet this is an advantage which Ministers and Magistrates have not in the exercise of *their* Authority; especially in Places, that are large and populous. In such Places, Vice may lay hid in many corners, notwithstanding their utmost diligence to find it out; and vicious Parents and Masters, and all those who live under their government, may go on long unreproved and unpunished, for want of due Information to the Minister and the Magistrate; who therefore cannot be so serviceable in the suppression of Vice as they otherwise might, unless assisted by *private Intimations* from others, who have better opportunities to observe the behaviour and conversation of particular persons. And whatever Reproaches may be cast upon such men, for this charitable office to the souls of their neighbours, it is undoubtedly in it self a pious and religious work; such an expression of hatred against Sin, and of zeal for God's Glory, and the Salvation of mens Souls, as highly becomes every Christian. And as long as they are conscious of the sincerity of their own Intentions, they have no reason to regard the Scoffs and Revilings of men; both because their zeal and diligence in this good work, notwithstanding all the Reproaches of men, will be sure to meet with a special Reward and Commendation from God; and also because they are the Reproaches of Evil men, and, on that account, are to be esteemed Honours rather than Reproaches. They are the Reproaches of Lewd Places and Lewd Persons, the Reproaches of profane Swearers and Scoffers at Religion, the Reproaches of publick Nurseries of Gaming, and Harbours of Drunkenness and of other vile and unchristian Practices; all which are open and grievous offences against the Majesty of God. And as it is the Duty of a good Subject to
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an earthly Prince, to give Information of all Treasons against him and his Government, to the end the Actors in them may be restrain'd and punish'd; so is it no less the Duty of the Subjects and Servants of the Great God of Heaven and Earth, to inform his Vicegerents and those who are in Authority under them, of all such abominable Practices; which are properly Treasons against the Majesty of Heaven, and when the Actors are formed into a kind of *Associations* for carrying on the work of Satan, are no better than an open *Rebellion* against God, and a Defiance of him and his Laws. And when wicked Men openly associate *against* the Cause of God, it would be very strange in a Christian Country, if good men should be censured for associating *for* it; especially, when they intend no more, than to make themselves subservient to Legal Authority, that is, no more than to give the Laws against Profaneness and Immorality of all kinds, the effect which the Legislature intended them. And if it happen that an ill-designing person shall sometimes mix with them, and carry on his own private Interest under colour of suppressing Vice and Profaneness, this is not to be wonder'd at; since it is natural for men of the worst Designs, to chuse to execute them under the best Colours, and in the best Company, where they think they may stand most clear of Suspicion; and the Lives and Characters of the Body of those Persons who have engaged in this excellent work, together with the Care they have taken, and are ready to take, to see publick Justice done upon such Impostors, ought for ever to silence all Objections of that kind, and to induce all good men to have their hearts and hands open to encourage the work, and to help forward the publick Prosecutions of vicious Persons and disorderly Houses.

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And the Magistrate has the greatest need that can be, of such zealous and vigorous Assistance in the execution of the Laws against Profaneness and Immorality, within these large and populous Cities: Where great Wealth and Luxury sow the seeds of Lust and Debauchery, and much Idleness is a daily Temptation and Opportunity to carry them into Practice: Where persons, and their concerns and lives are so little known to one another, and Vice is so much less under the Restraints of Fear and Shame, than in other places, and therefore needs to be more narrowly watch'd: Whither numbers of Men and Women flock from all parts, to support themselves by Gaming and Lewdness; and having no other methods of Subsistence, are doubly diligent in corrupting of Youth. In a word, where, by this Concourse of corrupt minds and desperate fortunes, Vice is able to form it self into *Societies* and *Combinations* for the destruction of Virtue; and as I observ'd before, it would be very hard if they who form themselves into Societies for the defence and support of Virtue against those Combinations of Vice, should not meet with due commendation and encouragement from every *pious* and *good* man: Of which sort also, God be thanked, there are multitudes in this great and populous City; where not only Wickedness, but Religion also, is to be found in the greatest perfection, as well in the regular Devotions and exemplary Piety and Order of private Families, as in a zealous and constant Attendance upon the Publick Worship of God. But this pleasant and beautiful Scene is to be look'd upon as perpetually subject to the Innundations of Vice, unless the Banks and Fences be watch'd and guarded with the utmost Care and Diligence.

And as the Place, so the Time also, calls upon all serious and good men to exert themselves with the greatest zeal and activity in the support of God's Honour, and the defence of his Religion, against Profaneness and Immorality. The messenger of his hand has lately visited a neighbouring Nation in a very terrible manner; and tho' his hand be staid for the present, yet we have great cause to dread the Judgments, which Profaneness and Immorality do always, sooner or later, pull down upon Kingdoms and Countries, if there be not found among us a proportionable number of good men, whose zeal for the honour of God may appease his Vengeance, and make an atonement for the Nation, and as it were stand between the Living and the Dead.

And if the Circumstances both of Time and Place require a more than ordinary zeal for the maintenance of God's Honour, and the suppression of Profaneness and Immorality; I am very sure, it highly becomes Me, to whom the Providence of God has more immediately committed the Religious concerns of these great Cities, earnestly to beseech, exhort, and summon, and, if I may be allowed the expression, to give it in Charge to all who fear and love God, to appear openly and zealously in his Cause; to be diligent in executing the Laws against Profaneness and Immorality, and to raise and encrease their zeal for the support of Virtue and Religion, in proportion to the vigorous Attacks that they see made upon them by Satan and his wicked Instruments.

If it shall be made a question, whose work and business it properly is to protect Religion and maintain the Honour of God upon earth, and to what Sort, Order,

Order, or Degree of men it belongs; this seems to me not unlike another enquiry, about which speculative men have busied themselves, namely, what are the proper *Motives* of Obedience to God, whether Fear, or Hope, or Love only: To which the true answer is, that all are proper *Motives*, and all too little to keep men stedfast in their Obedience to God. In like manner, if the question be ask'd, to what Order of men the protecting of Religion, and maintaining the Honour of God does belong; the proper answer is, that it belongs to all Orders, to Ministers, Magistrates, and all Mankind, of what Rank or Degree soever; and God knows, it is too apparent, that the numbers out of all sorts, that are willing to engage in the service, and lay the work to heart, are too little, with their whole united strength, to maintain Religion and Virtue against the open Insults of Profaneness and Immorality. As all mankind, of what Rank, Order, or Degree soever, have received from God their Being, and all the Powers and Faculties of Body and Soul, they stand more immediately engaged to employ them to his Honour and Glory from whom they receiv'd them, and who gave them principally for that end. As all Power, whether it be in a Natural or Civil Capacity, is derived from God; so in all *Commissions* of Power, of what kind or nature soever, a strict obligation to maintain the honour and character of him from whom we receive our Power, is always understood, tho' it be not express'd. As God is our Common Lord and Master, and all Mankind his Servants; it is a Common obligation upon All to employ the several Talents which he has committed to them, not only to the carrying on the business of their stations, but also to the maintenance of his own honour. For, is there any Master upon earth, who will account that his Servant has done

his Duty, barely by attending the work and business more immediately belonging to his station; if it appear, that such Servant can sit still, contentedly and unconcern'd, when he hears his Master reproach'd and reviled?

I grant, if the question be ask'd, in what *Ways* the several sorts and orders of men are bound to promote the Honour of God; there is a difference in the obligation, arising from the different Abilities and Opportunities which God has put into their hands; but the general Obligation to employ whatever Abilities and Opportunities he has given, in his service and to his honour, is common to all mankind. It is the voice of Nature and Reason, and of all Ages and Countries that have been Worshippers of the True God; and it will be time enough to make it a question, to what part of mankind the work belongs, when we see any part over-zealous and over-active in it; it will be time enough to *discharge* any sort from the Service, when Virtue and Religion have visibly got the better of Vice and Profaneness, and we see them in quiet possession of their Conquests. But at present, I doubt it is too true, that as most men need to be spurr'd on in the prosecution of this great work, so the Joint-Endeavours of all good men will be little enough to enable Virtue and Religion to maintain their ground against Vice and Profaneness, and against the various Engines contriv'd by a corrupt Generation, to support them, and keep them in countenance.

Amongst these, I must particularly take notice of *Masquerades*; as they deprive Virtue and Religion of their last Refuge, I mean *Shame*; which keeps multitudes of Sinners within the bounds of *Decency*, after they have broken thro' all the Ties of Principle and Conscience. But this Invention sets them

them free from that Tie also; being neither better nor worse, than an Opportunity to say and do there, what Virtue, Decency, and Good-Manners will not permit to be said or done in any other Place. If persons of either Sex will frequent lewd and profane Plays, or openly joyn themselves to Loose and Atheistical Assemblies of any kind, *they have their Reward*, they are sure to be mark'd and branded by all good men, as persons of corrupt minds and vicious Inclinations, who have abandon'd Religion and all pretensions to it, and given themselves over to Luxury and Profaneness. And as bad as the World is, this is a very heavy load upon the Characters of men, and, in spite of all the endeavours of Vice to bear up and keep it self in countenance, it sinks them by degrees into infamy and contempt. But this pernicious Invention *intrenches* Vice and Profaneness, against all the Assaults and Impressions of Shame; and whatever Lewdness may be concerted, whatever Luxury, Immodesty, or Extravagance may be committed in word or deed, no one's Reputation is at stake, no one's Character is responsible for it. A circumstance, of such terrible consequence to Virtue and Good-Manners, that if *Masquerades* shall ever be reviv'd, as we heartily hope they will not, all serious Christians within these two great and populous Cities will be nearly concerned to lay it to heart, and diligently to bestir themselves in cautioning their friends and neighbours against such fatal Snares. Particularly, all who have the Government and Education of Youth, ought to take the greatest Care to keep them out of the way of this dangerous Temptation; and then to labour against the *Spreading* of it; considering the proneness of mankind to fall into the Diversions and Manners of those who are of a superiour Rank and Character.

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I cannot forbear to add, that, all Religious Considerations apart, this is a Diversion that no *true Englishman* ought to be fond of, when he remembers that it was brought among us by the Ambassador of a neighbouring Nation in the last Reign, while his Master was in measures to *Enslave* us; and indeed there is not a more effectual way to Enslave a People, than first to dispirit and enfeeble them by Licentiousness and Effeminacy.

And thus I have shewn, *First*, How every good man ought to be affected, when he sees and observes the wickedness of the world; that it becomes him to lay it to heart, and to be greatly grieved and concerned at it. *Secondly*, I have shewn, what is to be done on the part of a good man, to make it appear that his grief and concern are *heartly* and *sincere*: He must first firmly resolve that he will use his utmost diligence to oppose and make head against it; and then, in pursuance of that resolution, he must take all proper opportunities to check and discourage it, as far as his station and condition shall impower and enable him, and in such ways and methods as may most probably bring about the reformation of sinners.

There is yet one way more of expressing our grief and concern at the wickedness of mankind, and it is equally in every one's Power to *help* and *assist* in that way; namely, to pray to God, that he will be graciously pleased to *restrain* the power of Sin and Satan, and *enlarge* the Kingdom of Christ upon earth; that he will touch the heart of every sinner with a lively sense both of his vileness, and his danger; that he will inspire all Orders and Degrees of men among us with zeal and courage to oppose and discountenance Vice; and especially, that it will please him to put it into the hearts of our Governours

Governours and Magistrates, and all others who are in Office and Authority of any kind, to set themselves seriously to promote his honour and glory, from whom they received their Authority, and to whom they must give an account of it at the Last Day.

Now, to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy-Ghost, be ascribed all honour, power, praise, might, majesty, and dominion, henceforth and for evermore.

F I N I S.



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7

The Nine and Twentieth
A C C O U N T
 OF THE
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 Cities of *London* and *Westminster*,
 And Places adjacent,
 By the SOCIETIES for Promoting
 a *Reformation of Manners*;

By Furthering the Execution of the LAWS
 against Profaneness and Immorality; and other
 Christian Methods.

THE said SOCIETIES have, in pursuance
 of their Design, from the *First of December* 1722,
 to the *First of December* 1723, Prosecuted divers sorts
 of Offenders, (*viz.*)

For	{ Lewd and Disorderly Practices ———	1622
	{ Keeping of Bawdy and Disorderly Houses ———	35
	{ Exercising their Trades or Ordinary ———	648
	{ Callings on the <i>Lord's-Day</i> ———	
	{ Profane Swearing and Cursing, ———	96
	{ Drunkenness ——— ——— ———	5

The said *Societies* have also been Assisting in
 Prosecuting Common Gamesters and their
 Associates ——— ——— ——— } 38

For keeping Common Gaming Houses ——— 4

The Total Number of Persons Prosecuted by
 the Societies, in and near *London* only, for
 Debauchery and Profaneness for 33 Year } 86944
 last past, are calculated at Eighty Six Thou
 sand Nine Hundred Forty Four

IF Impiety and Debauchery had gone on Spreading and Increasing among us for the last *Thirty-Years*, at that prodigious rate as they did for many Years before, we had assuredly been one of the most profligate Nations in the Christian World, and that under the clearest Light and greatest Advantages for the knowing and practising our Duty, of almost any other Nation; which must probably have reduc'd us to a very miserable Condition long before now: but by the Blessing of God upon the various Endeavours of the Societies of several sorts, for Promoting Religion, and Reformation of Manners, a wonderful Check hath been given to the Prevalency of the most scandalous Vices, and in many Instances a visible Reformation has ensu'd.

The Reasonableness of Uniting in *Societies*, for the more effectual carrying on a Work of this Nature, need not be further prov'd, after what has been said with so much Advantage upon that Subject in the *Annual Reformation Sermons*; as also, by the Excellent Author of *The Whole Duty of Man*, who in his Treatise of *The Causes of the Decay of Christian Piety*, hath this remarkable Passage: *The Scandal (saith he) brought upon Religion, as it was not contracted by the Irregularities of one or two Persons, but by associated and common Crimes; so neither will it be removed by a few single and private Reformations. There must be Combinations and publick Confederacies in Virtue to balance and counterpoise those of Vice, or she will never recover that Honour which she acquired by the general Piety of her Professors.*

Thanks

Thanks be to God, many such Combinations and publick Confederacies are now in Being, who make it a great part of their Business to oppose associated, as well as particular Offenders.

The *Societies for Reformation of Manners* are eminently of that number: And the Usefulness of such Confederacies is visible from what has been actually brought about by Means of the said Societies, beyond what could have been hoped for from any private Endeavours. Multitudes for *Six and Twenty Years* last past, have been prosecuted and punished according to Law, for lewd and scandalous Practices. Great numbers of Bawdy-houses, and other disorderly Houses, have been suppressed and shut-up, and the Streets were very much purged from the wretched Tribe of *Night-walking Prostitutes*, and most detestable Sodomites. Many young Men, taken with lewd Women, have, by their being brought to timely Shame and Punishment, been discouraged and turned (as we have reason to hope) from following such sinful Courses, which often cause them to defraud their Parents, Masters, &c. and bring themselves to utter Ruine. Moreover, many Thousands of Books have been dispersed by these *Societies* throughout the Kingdom, and put into the hands of lewd and profane Persons, to awaken them to a sense of their Sins. By these various Methods, many Persons have, by the Blessing of God, been brought to a sense of their Sin

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and Danger; and though they have at first been exasperated against the Instruments of awakening them out of their dreadful Lethargy, and stopping them in their sinful Courses; yet have afterwards blessed God for their Recovery, and been heartily thankful to those who have been serviceable to them therein.

This Undertaking, begun by a very few Persons, has mightily spread it self, not only in *Great-Britain*, but in Foreign Parts. And the great Good, which, by God's Blessing, has been done by the said *Societies*, has very much animated their Endeavours. They have likewise been encouraged by several Royal Proclamations, Orders of Sessions, Presentments of Grand-Juries in many Counties of *England*; by the Lord-Mayors and Court of Aldermen of the City of *London*; by many Sermons of the Right Reverend the Bishops, and other Eminent Divines, preached to the Societies, and published throughout the Kingdom; and by the Writings of other Learned Men; as also by the solemn Approbation of a considerable number of Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and the Honourable Judges of *England* and *Ireland*, and the Commissioners of several Protestant Churches.

It must be confessed, That Profaneness and Debauchery do still too much abound; yet it cannot be deny'd, but that they are reformed, in their various Branches, to a very remarkable degree; from whence 'tis evident, that since this

this Work has had such considerable Success, notwithstanding the many and great Difficulties it has struggled with, much greater Advances might have been expected, had there been a more general and hearty Concurrence of Persons of all Orders amongst us, in Proportion to the Greatness of the Concern.

Those therefore that have a just Zeal for the Honour of God and Religion; who desire to prevent the spreading of the Leprosie of Sin; who are unwilling to have their Children, and other Relations, or their Friends and Servants, corrupted by ill Examples and wicked Allurements: Those that sincerely wish well to those excellent and hopeful Nurseries of Piety and good-Manners, the **CHARITY-SCHOOLS**; and would be heartily grieved to see the Christian Instruction and pious Education that Children receive therein, miscarry, through prevailing open Temptations to Wickedness, and a general Contempt of Religion: Those, lastly, who have any due Love to their Country, and wou'd prevent a National Guilt, and thereby keep off National Judgments, cannot possibly, one wou'd think, but heartily approve and assist this useful Design for Suppressing Profaneness and Immorality.

Now, whereas some have most maliciously insinuated; That it is not *Reformation* which is intended, but the getting of Money from the Delinquents; and by such

such base and vile Reports, have imposed on some very well-meaning People: It is hereby declared to the World, That such a Charge upon these Societies is absolutely false. It is allowed, that there have been some base and wicked Persons, (not engaged, or in the least concerned in the Societies for Reformation of Manners) who have extorted Money from Offenders, and sometimes from honest Men. But all such Practices are utterly detested by these Societies, (who, it is well known, have strictly enquired after such Persons, and, when discover'd, have brought them to Punishment) nor do they know or believe, that any engaged in these Societies are chargeable therewith. And to prevent, as much as is possible, all Suspicion of a mercenary Design or Principle in any that act in the Business of *Reformation*; the GENTLEMEN concerned have all along recommended it, and indeed insisted upon it with those of the Societies, who have given Informations against *Vice* or *Profaneness*, that they should never receive that part of the Penalty which the Law allows the Informer; and it has not come to their Knowledge in upwards of *Twenty Years* time, that any one Person of those Societies have acted otherwise. However, if at any time hereafter it should happen that any Person

or

or Persons, concerned in any of the Societies for Promoting *Reformation of Manners*, should be chargeable with any of the evil Practices before mentioned, or ev'n with taking the Reward which the Law allows them; It is humbly requested of all that are heartily concerned for the Interest of Religion, that they will give them Notice thereof.

N. B. The Persons concerned in these Societies *confine* their Prosecutions to the Offences mentioned in this *Account*.

And for the further Preventing any Objections from those who are too much disposed to raise them, against this necessary Work of *Reformation*; that there is more Regard had to the Punishment, than to the Conversion of profane and vicious Persons; it may not be improper to acquaint the World, That in Conjunction with the other pious and proper Methods of *Instruction, Admonition* and *Reproof*, which are used by the Societies to awaken Men to a Sense of their Sins, and Concern for their Souls, the Number of *large Books*, and *lesser Discourses*, that have been wrote by some of the Members of the Societies for Reformation, or which they have procured to be wrote and published by others, and have given at their own Charge, in this and other Kingdoms, for the Furthering of the Reformation of this, and other Nations, and

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and the particular Conversion of such Offenders as they have brought to Punishment for their crying Enormities, are calculated at more than **Four Hundred Thousand.**

The Number of Books given away by the Societies, above **400,000**

THE END.

